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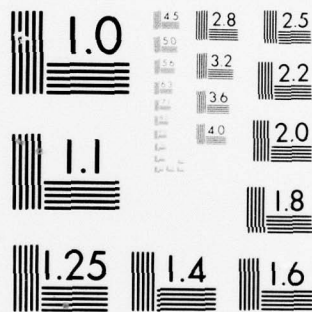
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6 THE RANGE AND LIMITS OF EXTERNAL INFLUENCE ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION: A COMMENTARY,

10 Arnold Horelick

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THE RANGE AND LIMITS OF EXTERNAL INFLUENCE ON INTERNAL  
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION: A COMMENTARY \*

The third and final session of the workshop was given over to a consideration of the range and limits of external influence on Soviet domestic development, with Arnold Horelick leading the discussion of a paper by John Whitman. This session was the most directly policy-oriented of the three. Its underlying theme was the question posed by Mr. Horelick: what are American interests in the nature of Soviet domestic development, and how are these interests best served? This policy problem, in turn, involved two fundamental analytical issues: first, the nature of the linkage between external influences and internal Soviet development; and second, the nature of the linkage between internal Soviet development and Soviet international behavior.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Horelick addressed himself first to a series of what he felt were problematical distinctions in Mr. Whitman's paper, and then to the character of the general literature on appropriate American policy for influencing domestic Soviet development.

The first of these distinctions stems, Mr. Horelick said, from the focus of Mr. Whitman's paper on those external influences of a direct and deliberate type which are subject to Western choice. In Mr. Horelick's opinion, this approach has many virtues, imparting to the discussion of a welcome policy focus. But there is also a

\* This is a summary of comments on "The Range and Limits of External Influence on Internal Developments in the Soviet Union," a paper delivered by John Whitman at a Workshop on the External Environment and Political Change in the Soviet Union, conducted at the Research Institute on International Change, Columbia University, on 3 March 1976. It has been prepared for a forthcoming issue of the journal, *Soviet Union*, which will publish the proceedings of the workshop.

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problem with it because it excludes from our consideration a vast range of external influences of a more diffuse and non-willed type that are far more numerous, powerful, and less susceptible to Soviet governmental control than the kinds of influences that are included. (For example, the social impact of worldwide diffusion of the material culture of advanced Western industrial societies, from which even the USSR is not immune). While it is possible to distinguish analytically between those two classes of external influences, it is very difficult to do so empirically. Because the more diffuse, non-deliberate influences tend to have broad amplifying effects, they are likely to be more pervasive in their consequences than those over which we can exercise deliberate choice. Without taking the former into account, the picture is even more pessimistic as regards the prospects for beneficial internal change in the USSR as a function of external influence and conservative with respect to options available to us for promoting change.

Another problematic distinction in Mr. Whitman's paper is that drawn between our "legitimate national interests" in the structure and operating patterns of the Soviet domestic system (e.g., secrecy in foreign and military policy decisionmaking), on the one hand, and our "humanitarian interests" in the conditions of personal life in the Soviet Union, on the other. To Mr. Horelick, this distinction is also difficult to maintain in practice (e.g., how to distinguish our "legitimate national interest" in lifting the cloak of secrecy that shrouds Soviet military and foreign policymaking from our "humanitarian interests" in ameliorating the repression of human rights in the USSR that maintenance of secrecy entails). That such a distinction can in fact be made is implicit both in the general literature and in Secretary Kissinger's treatment of the question, but since it is not clear what the boundaries are, it is difficult to come to grips with the nature of the interaction between the two interests. Mr. Whitman argues that at the most basic level these interests are reinforcing, but that at less basic levels they generate

contradictions. The contradictions are said to arise from the fact that different groups in our society take up different causes vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, thus leading to endless tactical disputes and dissipation of whatever influence we might have. But it is hard to know whether the contradictions result so much from inevitably imperfect coordination of our policy instruments as from the inherently fuzzy character of the distinction between our "national" and "humanitarian" interests in exerting influence on Soviet domestic development.

A similar point may be made about Mr. Whitman's tactical recommendation that there be a functional division of labor among the Executive, the Congress, and public organizations. Mr. Whitman implies that the executive branch should handle the formal bilateral dealings, without much congressional or public interference, while public groups should be responsible for articulating goals and guidelines and mounting campaigns, particularly in the humanitarian field. Again, the distinction is neat enough in theory, but hard enough to realize even under the best conditions (i.e., in the presence of a broad national foreign policy consensus and harmonious executive-congressional relations). Under existing conditions, the recommended division of labor has little meaning at all. In the past, the guidelines and goal setting, as well as the tactics and much of the extra-governmental activity, would have been generated or inspired by the Executive. For better or worse, the Executive now lacks the appropriate authority and confidence of the public; moreover, with respect to the issue at hand, it has not placed before the nation a coherent set of goals that begin to resemble guidelines for operative policymaking and execution.

Finally, there is Mr. Whitman's distinction between objectives "idle to pursue," and those which, presumably, are not. Dismantling the Soviet one-party system, for example, is discounted as an idle goal; but seeking the regime's closer adherence to principles to which it has subscribed in the Final Act, the Declaration of Human Rights and the USSR Constitution, is apparently not. Without putting some operational meat on the ostensibly "non-idle" objectives,

Mr. Horelick observed, it is hard to see how they can be distinguished from the "idle" ones.

With respect to the operation of the Soviet system, Mr. Whitman suggests that a reasonable objective might be a slow widening of the political process to allow enlarged participation of additional groups and increased weight to their interests. In Mr. Horelick's view, this raises two very large questions: what can we do to help realize these objectives?; and what kinds of changes in Soviet foreign policy behavior can we expect from progress in this direction? The answers are by no means clear.

For example, it is not clear that our exchanges and other contacts have enhanced the capacity of Soviet scientists and other professionals to influence the Soviet decisionmaking process. Furthermore, the implications of increased inputs of specialized knowledge for the conduct of Soviet external policy are indeterminate at best. In fact (as Mr. Whitman points out), expert policy preferences are not likely to diverge radically from those of the Party. But even assuming that an increased role for Soviet scientists and professionals in decision-making is likely to have effects beneficial to us, Mr. Horelick did not find persuasive the case that has been made for the value of joint U.S.-Soviet exchange programs thus far in promoting that objective. As presently operated, the exchange program hardly seems like an effective way for us to get our demands registered and taken into account, as Mr. Whitman suggests it is. In Mr. Horelick's experience, the principle of reciprocity has been poorly observed, perhaps in part because U.S. scholarly and professional participants have been reticent to register demands for it.

Despite these criticisms, Mr. Horelick found Mr. Whitman's paper to be a well-structured, sober and balanced assessment of what is desirable and feasible, given the constraints, and superior to most of the literature on the subject. Both academic and governmental output is characterized by befuddlement, and public discussion of the question reveals a conceptual vacuum that is filled mostly by platitudes and self-serving assertions. Our analytic capacity to cope with

these issues is extremely limited; indeterminacy, uncertainty, and skepticism are therefore to be expected. In fact, since we are dealing with issues that are not susceptible to crisp analytic solutions, it is inevitable that we tend to fall back on our philosophical predispositions; to clarify the issues under debate, it would be best to be quite explicit about this.

Mr. Horelick then offered some general observations on the nature of the dialogue. He noted that the general literature shows some areas of broad agreement which serve as common points of departure from which the argument branches off in a multiplicity of inconclusive directions.

First of all, there is a broadly shared view that the internal character of the Soviet system profoundly affects the conduct of its foreign and military policies. There are, however, a variety of different emphases. Some observers draw a fundamental and deterministic link, so that the nature of the Soviet system is seen as defining the basic objectives of its external behavior. This approach makes the USSR inexorably expansionist and basically hostile. Others stress the instrumental aspects of the Soviet domestic system, especially the presumed advantages for the conduct of Soviet foreign and military policies of secrecy and the lack of domestic political constraints. There is an implication, quite pervasive, but not systematically articulated, that a more liberal, pluralistic Soviet polity would have a higher stake in international order and stability, or reduced capability for disturbing it, and hence would be more pacific in international relations. Mr. Horelick said that he shared some of Mr. Brzezinski's reservations on this point, although he was not prepared to argue the converse.

Another area of broad disagreement is that, whatever the limits which the Soviet domestic order places on the degree or extent of cooperative relations we should seek with the USSR, the imperatives of avoiding nuclear war require that we engage the Soviet Union in

joint efforts to regulate our core military relationship, especially in strategic nuclear arms. While "linkage" of progress in SALT to Soviet restraint in world troublespots was once more fashionable than it is today, there has never been serious inclination to predicate arms control agreements on changes in the internal character of the Soviet system.

Beyond these two areas, Mr. Horelick detected great divergence and general muddle. How, then, should we define our interests as a people and a government in the nature of the Soviet domestic system and its future evolution? Most people believe that we have a humanitarian interest in alleviating conditions in the USSR. The official view, however, is that as a government our proper concern is with Soviet behavior internationally; thus Secretary Kissinger has stated that we will insist on responsible Soviet international behavior as the primary index of our relations. (In Mr. Horelick's view, it is hard to escape the conclusion that in operational terms "primary" means "exclusive.") In a similar vein, Marshall Shulman wrote in a recent Foreign Affairs piece that the concerns of the U.S. government are properly limited to those aspects of the Soviet system which bear directly on foreign policy. But this is precisely the rub: which aspects do bear? Mr. Shulman's example is that we have a legitimate concern with the extent of military influence on Soviet politics. But Mr. Horelick thought it difficult to conceive of a concern closer to the heart of Soviet internal affairs than this one. If this is a legitimate concern of our government, then surely we can say the same about secrecy (with its implications for the Soviet arms posture), and about the internal police system that cultivates and maintains it. Secretary Kissinger's view, of course, is that the imperatives of avoiding nuclear war impose limits on our ability to produce desired internal change, but he has not suggested what lies below the threshold. There is no theory here, no alternative to prudent trial-and-error.

Prudence, Mr. Horelick concluded, requires that we carefully identify those areas of our relations with the Soviet Union that are defined by the imperatives of human physical survival and that we cultivate them as best we can, independently of their potential impact on the domestic character of the Soviet system. Beyond that, however, lies a broad range of relations with the Soviet Union that we can properly elect to cultivate or not, depending on how they impinge on interests and values, political and moral, that we may not share with the Soviet Union, and including our national and humanitarian interests in promoting beneficial change in the Soviet domestic order. We have made no systematic effort to draw a line between the imperative and the optional in our relations with the Soviet Union, a failure that contributed to the degeneration of our national debate on detente into empty sloganeering.

Mr. Horelick would argue, therefore, that given our broad agreement that humanistic change in the Soviet system serves both our national and humanitarian interests, we need quite deliberately to define for ourselves areas of our relationship with the Soviet Union where concern for inducing positive change in the conditions of Soviet life and in the domestic practices of the Soviet government can be permitted to influence, even to determine, our choices. That may mean foregoing some of the easy and largely atmospheric agreements we have reached in the past. But our own self-identity, as well as our national and humanitarian interests, require that we avoid submerging, if only through benign neglect, the fundamental social and political differences between the two societies, even as we collaborate with Soviet leaders to ensure that the ongoing competition does not turn violent.